THE CHILLING ARCHIVES OF HORROR COMICS!™

HAUNTED HORROR™

#24

MADAM CLIZIA

I LOVE PLANTS, DON'T YOU?
I LIKE THE VINES THAT CRAWL UP YOUR NECK TO *STRANGLE* YOU.
I LIKE THE *POISONOUS HERBS* THAT KILL YOU WITH ONE DROP OF THEIR *NEFARIOUS JUICES*. AND I LIKE THOSE PLANTS THAT BEFOUL THE AIR WITH THEIR SNEEZE-INDUCING POLLENS. IT'S THEIR WAY TO SAY TO US,
"I *SUFFOCATINGLY* LOVE YOU BACK!"
THIS ISSUE OF *HAUNTED HORROR* IS DEDICATED TO MY *PLANTS*, THOSE *FUNGI* GROWING IN MY DAMP BASEMENT, AND OTHER *INFECTING AFFLICTIONS*. I *THROTTLE* THEM WITH *LOVE* AND THEY THRIVE. YOU CAN SAY THAT I HAVE A *BLACK THUMB!*

Art by
Drazen Kozjan

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A PURPLE CLAW MYSTERY

WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN IN THE STEAMING FLORIDA EVERGLADES, STRANGE THINGS BEGIN TO HAPPEN. MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN THERE... BUT NO ONE HAS EVER RETURNED. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN **DR. JONATHAN WEIR**, WEARER OF THE **PURPLE CLAW**, ENTERS THE HOT STIFLING EVERGLADES SWAMPS TO BATTLE THE DEADLY EVIL....

PURPLE CLAW

BROWN & GANTZ

OUR STORY OPENS IN A HOTEL ROOM IN MIAMI, FLORIDA. SAM BARNEY, TOUGH NEW YORK MOBSTER, AND HIS HENCHMAN, TRIGGER MARTEX, HAVE JUST ARRIVED...

YA THINK WE'LL BE SAFE DOWN HERE, SAM? YA THINK THE COPS KNOW WE DID IT?

SHUT UP, TRIGGER! YOU WORRY TOO MUCH! WE CAME DOWN HERE TO ENJOY THE SUNSHINE...SO ENJOY YOURSELF!

HOW CAN I ENJOY MYSELF WHEN THE COPS AN' EVERY HOOD IN NEW YORK ARE LOOKIN' FOR THE GUYS WHAT CROAKED JOEY MARCHETTI. ...NAMELY US!

THAT LOUSY DOUBLE-CROSSIN' RAT HAD IT COMIN' TO 'IM! AND BESIDES, NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE THAT WE DID IT! SO STOP YOUR WORRYIN'! C'MON, LET'S GO FOR A SWIM!

The Purple Claw #3, May 1963. Pencils: Ben Brown; inks: David Gantz. Publisher: Toby.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, ON THE BEACH AN OLD BEACHCOMBER APPROACHES SAM AND TRIGGER...

SCRAM, YA OLD BUM! DO YER PANHANDLIN' SOMEWHERES ELSE!

I DON'T WANT ANY MONEY, MISTER. I JUST CAME TO GIVE YOU A MESSAGE! THE COPS IN NEW YORK KNOW WHO KILLED JOEY MARCHETTI....

WHAT'RE YOU TRYIN' TO HAND ME? I OUGHTA BREAK....

IT'S TRUE! CALL SLUG WILSON IN NEW YORK! HE'LL TELL YOU!

SAM DASHES FOR A PHONE, AND SOON...

IT'S TRUE! THE COPS KNOW WE DID IT! IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY CATCH US DOWN HERE!

WHAT'LL WE DO, SAM? WHERE CAN WE HIDE?

TELEPHONE

LOOK..I HAVE A LITTLE CABIN IN THE EVERGLADES! NO ONE'S EVER BEEN THERE AND NO ONE'LL FIND YOU THERE! I GOT ENOUGH PROVISIONS FOR HALF A YEAR.

I'M AFRAID WE GOT NO CHOICE. TELL US HOW TO GET THERE. IF IT PAYS OFF FOR US, WE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YA!

AFTER A LONG HARD DRIVE, SAM AND TRIGGER FIND THEMSELVES IN THE SWELTERING EVERGLADES...

HMM! NOT BAD! NOT BAD!

C'MON TRIGGER.. SNAP IT UP! I WANTA HIT THE HAY!

NIGHT FALLS. AND THE WEARY MEN ARE FAST ASLEEP. BUT...

YAAAAAAAA!

HELP! LEGGO! YAAAAA!

EEEEYYAAAAA!

NO! DON'T THROW US IN THERE! NO! NO

LEGGO LEGGO! I DON'T WANNA DIE!

YAAAAAAA!

NO NO!

AAGHHH!

SNAP

SOME DAYS LATER THE OLD BEACHCOMBER MEETS WALTER PARKER AND HIS WIFE, ON THE BEACH AT MIAMI....

I HOPE YOU'LL EXCUSE THE INTRUSION MR. PARKER, BUT WHEN I HEARD YOU WERE THE FAMOUS BOTANIST I JUST HAD TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, YOU SEE... I KNOW WHERE YOU CAN FIND SOME RARE SPECIES FOR YOUR COLLECTION!

I'M ALWAYS INTERESTED IN SOME NEW SPECIES. HAVE A SEAT AND TELL ME ABOUT THEM.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EVERGLADES, THERE'S A FLOWER THAT'S DIFFERENT FROM ANY YOU'VE SEEN. I'M SURE YOU HAVEN'T GOT IT IN YOUR COLLECTION. THERE'S A CABIN OUT THERE THAT YOU CAN USE AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, MARGE? WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO?

COUNT ME IN, WALTER!

AND THAT EVENING....

THIS PLACE IS ENCHANTING. MAYBE THE OLD MAN WAS RIGHT... MAYBE I **WILL** FIND A NEW SPECIES!

RIGHT NOW IT'S BEDTIME FOR YOU, WALTER! THAT WAS A LONG DRIVE FROM MIAMI!

THAT NIGHT AS WALTER SLEEPS, MARGE IS PLAGUED WITH A CASE OF INSOMNIA...

IF I COULD ONLY SLEEP! I'LL HAVE TO SEE DR. WILLIAMS AS SOON AS WE GET HOME.

MAYBE HELL...

EEEEEE! WALTER! WALTER!

OOOHHH!

YAAA! NO NO!

WHEN MARGE REGAINS CONCIOUSNESS IT IS MORNING. THINKING HEE HUSBAND MISSING, SHE SEARCHES THE SWAMPS...

WALTER...WALTER'S GOT TO BE ALIVE...HE'S JUST GOT TO...

AFTER AN ALL-DAY SEARCH, MARGE FINALLY GIVES UP. RETURNING TO MIAMI, SHE LOOKS UP ANOTHER FRIEND, DR. JONATHAN WEIR, IN FLORIDA FOR A MEDICAL CONVENTION....

...AND THAT'S THE STORY, DR. WEIR! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF IT... I'M FRIGHTENED AND WORRIED! I HOPE WALTER'S ALL RIGHT.

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT... WE'RE GOING TO THE EVERGLADES!

THIS LOOKS LIKE A CASE FOR THE **PURPLE CLAW**... AND I HAVE A FEELING THAT THIS WILL BE THE MOST DANGEROUS ONE HE'S EVER ENCOUNTERED!

THAT NIGHT IN THE MYSTERIOUS CABIN..

WHATEVER YOU DO...DON'T GO NEAR THAT BED! FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME, I GATHER WHATEVER IT IS THAT GRABBED WALTER, CAME FROM THE WINDOW! WE'LL JUST SIT AND WAIT...

ONE HOUR PASSES AND WEIR AND MARGE WAIT...

THEN...!

DR. WEIR! LOOK! LO...MMPH!

QUIET! COME ON..I'M GOING TO FOLLOW IT!

A MAN-EATING FLOWER! IT'S HORRIBLE! I'VE GOT TO DESTROY IT.

THE HUGE JAWS SNAP SHUT BUT THE UGLY FLOWER TREMBLES AS IT RECEIVES NO VICTIM. THE PURPLE CLAW QUICKLY LIGHTS A TORCH!

YAAAAAA!

AS THE FLOWER BURNS IT BEGINS TO CHANGE SLOWLY... IT BEGINS TO CHANGE INTO A MAN...

DR. WEIR, LOOK!

IT'S THE OLD BEACHCOMBER! THE ONE WHO TOLD US ABOUT THIS PLACE!

THAT'S RIGHT! JUST THE WAY I'VE BEEN GETTING ALL MY "CLIENTS" FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS!

I'M GOING TO DESTROY YOU, OLD MAN! YOU WILL NEVER MURDER AGAIN!

HEE! HEE! YOU CAN'T DESTROY ME, **PURPLE CLAW!** ARE YOU SURPRISED THAT I KNOW YOU? YOU ARE VERY WELL KNOWN IN THE LOWER REGIONS!

YOU CAN NEVER DESTROY ME! YOU SEE.. THE FLOWER CAN ONLY LIVE IN THE COOL OF NIGHT! YOUR TORCH MERELY "KILLED" IT FOR ONE NIGHT! IT WILL BLOOM AGAIN TOMORROW NIGHT. AND THAT'S WHEN YOU DIE! HEE! HEE!

WHY YOU...

AS THE PURPLE CLAW LEAPS FORWARD, HE IS CAUGHT IN A VISE-LIKE GRIP. THE VINES AND SWAMP GROWTH HAVE COME TO LIFE...

THIS SHOULD KEEP YOU UNTIL I GET BACK! I'M GOING INTO TOWN TO GET ANOTHER VICTIM! THE **DEATH FLOWER** WILL HAVE A ROYAL FEAST TOMORROW NIGHT.'

YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT, YOU FIEND!

IN A SALOON IN THE NEIGHBORING TOWN, THE OLD BEACHCOMBER FINDS HIS NEXT VICTIM...

HELLO SAILOR! I SEE YOU'RE ALL ALONE!

YEAH, MY GIRL DESERTED ME. ...THAT'S WHAT SHE DID, SHE DESERTED ME! WHYN'T YA SIT DOWN AND JOIN ME!

I KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE ALL ALONE, SAILOR! I KNOW JUST HOW YOU FEEL.

LOOK! WHY DON'T YOU COME OUT TO MY PLACE AND SPEND A FEW DAYS THERE? IT'S NICE AND PEACEFUL THERE AND WILL HELP YOU TO FORGET!

SAY, THAT'S MIGHTY NICE OF YOU! THANKS... BUT WE GOT PLENTY OF TIME! RIGHT NOW I WANT SOMEONE TO TALK TO! AFTER A COUPLE OF BEERS I'LL GO BACK WITH YA!

AND MANY MANY BEERS LATER!

OKAY, OLD TIMER...I'M ALL SET TO GO!

TOO LATE! THE PURPLE CLAW AND THE WOMAN WILL ESCAPE! WELL, AT LEAST THE FLOWER WILL HAVE **ONE** TONIGHT!

MEANWHILE BACK IN THE SWAMPS...

DR. WEIR, WE'RE FREE!

YES, AS SOON AS THE SUN CAME OUT THE VINES LOST THEIR LIFE! NOW WE'RE GOING TO WAIT FOR THE OLD MAN!

BELL-BOTTOM TROUSERS, COATS OF NAVY BLUE...

WHY'D I EVER BRING THIS LOUT? HE IS MORE TROUBLE THAN HE'S WORTH!

I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT SOMEONE ELSE

NO ONE ESCAPES THE PURPLE CLAW!!

WH...?

THE SAILOR LEAPS FORWARD TO PROTECT HIS "FRIEND" BUT...

YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO MY ...OW'W

HE HAS THE STRENGTH OF TEN MEN!

YOU'RE GOING TO DIE, **PURPLE CLAW!**

THE OLD MAN WRESTLES THE PURPLE CLAW TO THE GROUND AND RAISES A HEAVY CLUB. BUT SUDDENLY---

IT'S RAINING! **IT'S RAINING!**

THE COOL RAIN CAUSES A STRANGE THING TO HAPPEN. . . THE OLD MAN BEGINS TO TURN INTO. . . **THE DEATH FLOWER...**

HE'S TURNING! I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM NOW OR NEVER!

THERE!

THE POWERFUL BLOW SENDS THE FLOWER REELING BACK... INTO **QUICKSAND!**

AS THE UGLY FLOWER SLOWLY SINKS, ITS TENTACLES GRAB THE PURPLE CLAW...

THE PURPLE CLAW RIPS AT THE TENTACLES AND FINALLY HE FORCES THEM TO RELEASE THEIR GRIP...

DOWN, DOWN, DOWN INTO THE SLIMY CLUTCHES OF THE DEADLY QUICKSAND. THEN...

AAAAAAAAAAAA

NO ONE CAN EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED TODAY! BUT LET'S BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF THAT IT'S OVER!

THE CIVILIZED WORLD CAN NEVER REPAY YOU...**NEVER!**

THE END

ONLY ONE MAN KNEW ITS SECRET...THE MAN WHO WATCHED THOSE WRITHING BRANCHES, REACHING UP, CLAWING THE NIGHT SKY LIKE THE HANDS OF A STRANGLER! ONLY HE KNEW THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TREE HE CALLED THE...

GREEN KILLER!

GOOD THING WE'VE PLENTY OF LOGS! THIS IS NO NIGHT FOR TREE CHOPPING!

YOU'RE SOAKING WET, STRANGER! DRAW UP CLOSER TO THE FIRE! I'LL THROW ANOTHER LOG ON!

IT WAS ON SUCH A NIGHT THAT I WENT TREE CHOPPING-- MUCH TO MY SORROW! BUT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY TREE! THERE'LL NEVER BE ANOTHER LIKE IT...

SOUNDS VERY MYSTERIOUS! DO TELL US ABOUT IT! THIS IS A PERFECT NIGHT FOR A HORROR STORY!

Chamber of Chills Magazine #8, May 1952. Art: Vic Donahue. Publisher: Harvey Comics.

SOME YEARS AGO, I BOUGHT A BIT OF LAND NEAR A SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN! THE NAME DOESN'T MATTER -- WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT IS THE TREE!...

ON THE GROUND, FLANKING THE HIGHWAY, THE TREE STOOD...

IT LOOKS AS OLD AS TIME! STRANGE HOW THE BARK ALMOST SUGGESTS AN EVIL FACE! AND THOSE BRANCHES -- LIKE CLAWED HANDS!

AS A HARSH WIND SWEPT THESE TALONED BRANCHES, THE TREE SEEMED TO STIR RESTLESSLY, AS IF... AS IF IT WERE SUDDENLY AWARE OF MY PRESENCE...

THERE IS A MALIGNANCE ABOUT THE TREE! THE EVIL IS SO PHYSICAL I CAN ALMOST FEEL IT!

I QUESTIONED MY NEIGHBORS ABOUT THE TREE AND LEARNED IT HAD AN EVIL HISTORY! DURING THE REVOLUTION A TRAITOR WAS STOOD AGAINST IT AND SHOT TO DEATH--

ONCE A BUSINESS MAN HAD TRIED TO HIDE FROM HIGHWAYMEN, BUT THE BRANCHES HELD HIM CAPTIVE UNTIL THE HIGHWAYMEN FOUND HIM...

CAN'T- GET- LOOSE! UHHH...

THERE HE IS! SHOOT HIM DOWN!

BLAM!

BLAM!

AND THOSE VERY BRANCHES HAD BEEN USED FOR THE COWARDLY LYNCHING OF MANY AN UNFORTUNATE BEING! I COULD TELL YOU MORE OF ITS EVIL HISTORY, BUT WHY GO ON...

THE TERRIBLE TREE WAS ALWAYS IN MY WAKING THOUGHTS --- ITS EVIL IMAGE EVEN INVADED MY DREAMS --- HORRIBLE, NIGHTMARE DREAMS ...

NO!.. NO!!

WHAT A TERRIBLE DREAM! GOT TO CLEAR MY OPPRESSIVE THOUGHTS! NEED FRESH AIR!

I LOOKED OUT AND WHAT I SAW WAS STAGGERING, UNBELIEVABLE! THE TREE'S BRANCHES WERE REACHING OUT, PULLING A SPEEDING CAR TOWARD IT AS THOUGH THE CAR WAS A PUPPET ON INVISIBLE STRINGS!

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OH!

AN ACCIDENT PEOPLE CALLED IT! BUT I KNEW BETTER!

CAR SKIDDED OFF THE ROAD! GUESS THE DRIVER LOST CONTROL!

YES, THE DRIVER LOST CONTROL OF THE WHEEL-- BECAUSE THE DRIVER WAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THAT EVIL TREE! THAT TREE MURDERED HIM!

TWO DAYS LATER THE TREE MURDERED A CHILD-- A HAPPY CHILD WHO'D CLIMBED ITS BRANCHES ON A LARK!

A BRANCH BROKE UNDER THE CHILD! IT BROKE DELIBERATELY-- I'M POSITIVE OF THAT!

YA-AA!

I KNOW YOUR SECRET! YOU'RE A KILLER! NOW I'M GOING TO DESTROY YOU SO YOU CANNOT KILL AGAIN!

I WAS LIKE A MAN POSSESSED! UNDER A SULLEN SKY, MY AX BIT DEEPLY INTO THE GNARLED BARK-- AND IT SEEMED TO ME AS IF THE TREE SHUDDERED AND RECOILED, LIKE A WOUNDED BEAST!

HA! HA! NOW YOU ARE GOING TO DIE! I AM YOUR EXECUTIONER!

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A SNAPPING SOUND! ONLY MY AWARENESS OF THE TREE'S CUNNING SAVED ME FROM CRUSHING DEATH AS A HEAVY BRANCH CRASHED DOWN!

SNAP

OHHH! MY SHOULDER!

THE TREE TRIED TO KILL ME! IT KNOWS I AM ITS ENEMY! IT KNOWS I KNOW ITS SECRET! IT KNOWS!

I KNEW THEN THAT THE TREE WOULD NOT LET ME LIVE! SOMEHOW, SOME WAY, THE TREE WOULD GET ME UNLESS I FLED!

IF I STAY ON THIS LAND, SOMEDAY THE TREE WILL BRING ME UNDER ITS EVIL CONTROL AS IT DID THE CAR! I MUST MOVE... GO FAR AWAY!

I SOLD MY PROPERTY AND MOVED UPSTATE! THERE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY DAYS, I HAD WELCOME RELIEF FROM ANXIETY...

PEACE AND CONTENTMENT! NO NIGHTMARES ANY LONGER. AFTER A TIME I'LL FORGET ABOUT THE TREE! IT CAN'T HURT ME HERE!

WINTER CAME AND PASSED! THEN, SUDDENLY IT WAS SPRING BRINGING WITH IT THAW AND HEAVY RAINS! THE SWOLLEN RIVER OVERFLOWED ITS BANKS...

THE FLOOD WATERS ARE GETTING HIGHER! CAN'T RISK REMAINING HERE! I'LL HAVE TO ROW TO HIGHER LAND DOWN FURTHER.

MILES OF FLOODED LAND SWEPT PAST ME! I ROWED FOR HOURS! MY ARMS GREW NUMB WITH THE STRAIN OF IT--AND SUDDENLY IT HAPPENED...

THE OARS! I'VE LOST THE OARS! JUST COULDN'T HOLD THEM ANY LONGER!

THE SWIFT CURRENT TOOK MY BOAT AND SWEPT ON! THEN AS DARKNESS FELL SOMETHING SEEMED TO REACH UP OUT OF THE SWOLLEN WATERS--

AGHHH!

CRASH!

EVEN AS I WAS FLUNG INTO A WEB OF BRANCHES, I RECOGNIZED IT WITH HORRIFIED EYES--

IT'S *THE TREE!* THE FLOOD WATERS HAVE CARRIED ME BACK TO THE VERY MONSTER FROM WHICH I'VE FLED!

GOT TO GET AWAY! GOT TO GET LOOSE FROM IT! I MUST--OR I'M DOOMED!

BUT THE TREE KNEW! AND I COULD ALMOST SENSE ITS SHUDDER OF TRIUMPH AS ITS POWERFUL BRANCHES CLOSED ABOUT ME CONVULSIVELY!

IT'S HOLDING ME! I CAN'T GET FREE! I'M TRAPPED!!

THE TREE'S GREEDY BRANCHES HELD ME AS THE FLOOD WATERS GOT HIGHER AND HIGHER--- UNTIL I SCREAMED LIKE A LOST SOUL, AS THE WATERS CLOSED OVER MY HEAD!

THE TREE HAS WON! *AGHHHH!*

YOU POOR MAN! WHAT A DREADFUL EXPERIENCE! BUT THEN WHAT HAPPENED? HOW DID YOU FINALLY GET FREE OF THE TREE?

I DIDN'T!

I DROWNED!!

EEEEEE!!

THE END

HEE, HEE, HEE! TERRIFYING BEYOND BELIEF! HORRIBLE BEYOND THE POWERS OF THE IMAGINATION WAS TITUS GRIMM'S CREATION...

The CRAWLING HORROR

IT'S COMING TOWARD US! IT'S GOING TO EAT US ALIVE!

IT'S ALMOST THREE O'CLOCK, WILBUR. I THINK IT'S TIME YOU STOPPED TOYING WITH THAT SICKENING MESS IN THE JAR. WE COULD BOTH USE SOME SLEEP.

NOT YET, TITUS. I'M ON THE VERGE OF A GREAT DISCOVERY! I KNOW IT!

TITUS GRIMM AND WILBUR HATCH SHARED THE RAMSHACKLE BUILDING WHERE THEY LIVED AND WORKED... A DANK, CADAVEROUS HOUSE WHOSE EERIE LIGHTS OFTEN SHONE FAR INTO THE NIGHT!

INSIDE THE HOUSE, DOCTOR WILBUR HATCH, BIOCHEMIST, STARED IN FASCINATION AT THE PULSATING, BUBBLING MASS IN THE JAR BEFORE HIM.

THE PROTOPLASM IN THIS JAR WAS ORIGINALLY A BIT OF FLESH FROM THE HEART OF A FROG. FOR FIVE YEARS I'VE KEPT IT ALIVE AND GROWING!

BAH! YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, HATCH. THAT KIND OF THING HAS BEEN DONE BY ANY NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS!

Beware! Terror Tales #4, November 1952. Attributed to Maurice Gutwirth. Publisher: Fawcett.

WHAT THE OTHERS DID IS CHILD'S PLAY... A FEW PAMPERED CELLS HERMETICALLY SEALED IN NUTRIENT FLUID! BUT MY PROTOPLASM CAN LIVE IN AN OPEN JAR! I'VE EVEN TAUGHT IT TO CONSUME LIVING FLESH!

WHAT?!

I'VE CONDITIONED THE CELL MASS TO REACT TO THE STIMULUS OF HUNGER! WATCH. I'M GOING TO FEED IT THIS LIVE MOUSE!

SEE! IT SENSES FOOD! IT'S REACHING FOR THE MOUSE!

AMAZING!

FRANKLY, WILBUR, I HAD NO IDEA YOUR EXPERIMENTS HAD GONE THIS FAR.

YES, TITUS, I'M ON THE TRACK OF A GREAT DISCOVERY THAT WILL SHOW HOW LIFE DEVELOPED FROM THE PRIMORDIAL PROTOPLASMIC OOZE TO THE COMPLICATED LIFE-FORMS OF TODAY!

BUT IT MAY TAKE YEARS TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED. IF ONLY THERE WAS A WAY TO SPEED UP MY EXPERIMENTS, TO ELIMINATE DEAD ENDS, AND MAKE PROBABILITY A CERTAINTY!

HM! MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU THERE. WHY NOT GIVE YOUR PROBLEMS TO MY ELECTRONIC CALCULATOR AND ANALYZER?

YOU MEAN THAT GLORIFIED ADDING MACHINE YOU FIDDLE AROUND WITH?

THAT ADDING MACHINE, AS YOU CALL IT, IS AN *ELECTRONIC BRAIN*— THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY INVENTION OF THE AGE!

COME NOW, TITUS, ELECTRONIC BRAINS ARE NOTHING NEW. THEY'VE BEEN USED FOR YEARS!

BAH! HUGE, CLUMSY MACHINES AS BIG AS BARNS! BUT MY ANALYZER IS NO LARGER THAN A TELEVISION SET AND FAR MORE EFFICIENT THAN THE FINEST "BRAIN" IN EXISTENCE. IT EVEN HAS AN ELECTRONIC MEMORY!

FROM THE CORNER OF THE ROOM THE GROTESQUE FACE OF THE BRAIN STARED AT THEM. FOR AN EERIE MOMENT, WILBUR FELT AS IF IT WAS WATCHING HIM, WAITING FOR HIS ANSWER!

WHY WASTE YEARS ON EXPERIMENTS WHEN YOUR PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED IN MINUTES? ALL YOU NEED DO IS REDUCE YOUR QUESTIONS INTO MATHEMATICAL TERMS. THE MACHINE WILL DO THE REST.

ALL RIGHT, TITUS. I'LL HAVE THE FIGURES FOR YOU IN A FEW MOMENTS.

SHORTLY AFTERWARD, WILBUR WAS STARING WITH WILD INCREDULITY AT THE AMAZING POWERS OF THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN!

IT'S UNBELIEVABLE! WHY, IN TEN SHORT MINUTES THAT MACHINE SOLVED PROBLEMS THAT WOULD HAVE TAKEN ME YEARS.

HUMMMM

TIC-TOC-TIC

IF THESE FIGURES ARE CORRECT, THIS NEW NUTRITIONAL FORMULA SHOULD TRIPLE THE GROWING POWER OF THE PROTOPLASM AND IMPROVE ITS REACTIONS TO STIMULI!

I'LL LEAVE THE FORMULA ON THE SHELF AND TEST IT THE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.

THE NEXT MORNING...

MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN TO SWITCH IT OFF LAST NIGHT!

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOUR ELECTRONIC BRAIN, DOESN'T IT, TITUS?

MMMM

TIC-TOC-TIC

I FORGOT TO TURN OFF THE MEMORY CONTROLS WHEN WE FINISHED CALCULATING YOUR PROBLEM LAST NIGHT.

THEN WITH THE MEMORY CONTROLS ON THE MACHINE MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING ON MY PROTOPLASMIC PROBLEMS ALL NIGHT!

PERHAPS! BUT PROBABLY THE THING'S BEEN GOING AROUND IN ELECTRONIC CIRCLES SO TO SPEAK.

SUDDENLY, WILBUR HATCH FELT COLD -- THE ICY CHILL OF A PREMONITION OF EVIL SETTLED ABOUT HIM! AND AT THE SIGHT UPON HIS LABORATORY TABLE, THE FEELING DEEPENED!

THE CELL MASS! IT'S OVERFLOWING -- IT HAS TRIPLED IN SIZE SINCE LAST NIGHT!

THAT BOTTLE WITH THE NEW NUTRIENT FLUID WAS STANDING OVER THE JAR. IT MUST HAVE BEEN KNOCKED OVER!

TITUS, DO YOU THINK THAT ELECTRONIC BRAIN HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS?

NONSENSE! YOU'RE LETTING YOUR IMAGINATION RUN AWAY WITH YOU, WILBUR. IT WAS PROBABLY THE CAT!

HE'S RIGHT! IT PROBABLY WAS THE CAT. I GUESS THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT CUT AWAY SOME OF THAT PROTOPLASM. THERE'S TOO MUCH FOR THE JAR TO HOLD.

CUTTING AWAY EXCESS GROWTH FROM THE CELL MASS WAS A STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR WILBUR. BUT THIS TIME AS THE SCALPEL TOUCHED THE QUIVERING PROTOPLASM THERE WAS A SUDDEN, GRUESOME REACTION!

UGH! IT'S MOVING -- COILING ITSELF ABOUT MY WRISTS! TUGGING AT MY HANDS. RESISTING ME!

AS WILBUR FINISHED HIS TASK, HIS SKIN WAS CRAWLING WITH A SENSE OF IMPENDING EVIL.

UNTIL NOW IT ONLY REACTED TO HUNGER. NOW IT REACTS TO FEAR AND DANGER, TOO. THAT NEW NUTRIENT FLUID HAS CHANGED IT SOMEHOW. IT'S AS IF THE CELL MASS CAN THINK AND FEEL.

AND AS THE DREAD IMPLICATION STRUCK HIM, HATCH'S BLOOD FROZE WITH A NAMELESS PREMONITION.

I DON'T CARE WHAT TITUS SAYS. THAT DEVILISH MACHINE OF HIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT!

THAT NIGHT, AS THE SCIENTISTS WEARILY LEFT THEIR WORK...

WELL, HATCH, I'VE CUT OFF EVERY SWITCH ON THE BRAIN. YOU'LL HAVE NO EXCUSE FOR YOUR OVER-IMAGINATIVE THEORIES.

TO MAKE DOUBLY SURE AGAINST ACCIDENTS, I'VE TIED UP THE CAT!

I'VE MIXED A SPECIAL BATCH OF THE NEW NUTRIENT SOLUTION-- BUT I'M KEEPING IT IN THAT CORNER VAT-- JUST TO BE SAFE!

BUT THE TENSIONS OF THE DAY KEPT WILBUR HATCH RESTLESS. HE COULDN'T SLEEP. ALL NIGHT LONG HE KEPT HEARING A HIGH PITCHED WHINE.

THERE IT IS AGAIN-- THAT NOISE. THERE'S ONLY ONE THING IT CAN BE.

HUUMMMM

TITUS! TITUS WAKE UP! YOU MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN TO SHUT OFF THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN!

UH? HUH?!

I TELL YOU, TITUS -- IT'S THAT MACHINE OF YOURS. IT'S BEEN RUNNING FULL BLAST ALL NIGHT!

OH, NONSENSE, HATCH! GO TO SLEEP. YOU'RE HEARING THINGS... YOU SAW ME SHUT THE THING OFF. YOU'RE LETTING THIS GET ON YOUR NERVES!

HE'S RIGHT! I'M NERVOUS AND OVERWROUGHT. IT'S PROBABLY JUST MY IMAGINATION.

BUT IT WAS MORE THAN WILBUR'S IMAGINATION. FOR AT THAT MOMENT IN THE ROOM BELOW THE UNDULATING MASS OF PROTOPLASM WAS SLIDING OUT OF THE JAR, OOZING AND BUBBLING ITS CLAMMY WAY ACROSS THE TABLE TOP AND DOWN TOWARDS THE FLOOR.

IT WAS TOWARD DAWN THAT WILBUR HATCH AWAKENED FROM A DRUGGED SLEEP--TO FIND HIMSELF LOCKED FAST IN AN OVERPOWERING FEAR!

THAT NOISE! IT'S COMING FROM BELOW!

SLOSH!

SLURP!

SOMETHING IS MOVING DOWN THERE--POURING--SLOPPING OVER THE FLOOR!

GURGLE!

GLUG!

AND IN THE ROOM BELOW A LOATHESOME DRAMA OF HORROR WAS MOVING SWIFTLY TOWARDS A GHASTLY CLIMAX!

MEEOOOWW

YYYYEEEE OOOWWRRR!

THE SICKENING SCREAM OF TERROR RIPPED THROUGH THE HOUSE -- THE PITEOUS CRY OF A BEAST IN ITS FINAL MOMENTS OF TORMENT AND AGONY.

W-WHAT'S THAT?!

THE CAT! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO THE CAT! LET'S GET DOWNSTAIRS! QUICKLY!

YYYYYYYYOWRRD

BUT IN THE ROOM BELOW A SCENE OF PRIMEVAL HORROR GREETED THEM!

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF THE CAT BUT A FEW BONES!

LOOK AT THAT TRAIL OF SLIME. IT LEADS AWAY FROM THE BONES TOWARD THE CORNER!

IT'S THAT PROTOPLASMIC MASS! SOMEHOW IT MANAGED TO GET OUT OF THE JAR AGAIN AND INTO THAT VAT OF SPECIAL FEED!

THIS IS AWFUL, TITUS. IT HAS GROWN TO A HUNDRED TIMES IT'S PREVIOUS SIZE!

COME, LET'S GET CLOSER, HATCH. I WANT TO HAVE A LOOK AT IT!

STAY AWAY, TITUS. STAY AWAY! IT SENSES YOUR APPROACH. IT WILL DESTROY YOU AS IT DID THE CAT!

I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING GOING ON DOWN HERE. THAT MACHINE OF YOURS HAS BEEN WORKING ALL NIGHT!

THE BRAIN? HM! MAYBE WE'D BETTER HAVE A LOOK.

YOU SEE, I TOLD YOU IT'S BEEN WORKING!

YES. AND THAT'S NOT ALL!

IT'S FANTASTIC! SOMEHOW THIS MACHINE HAS MANAGED TO FIND A WAY OF PUTTING ITSELF INTO OPERATION AT WILL!

WHAT!?

THIS MACHINE IS EVEN BETTER THAN I DREAMED. THIS BRAIN CAN THINK FOR ITSELF NOW. IT CAN POSE ITS OWN PROBLEMS AND SOLVE THEM! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?

IT MEANS WE'RE TREADING ON THE EDGE OF SOME UNFATHOMABLE EVIL. I TELL YOU, TITUS, WE MUST DESTROY THESE CREATIONS OF OURS BEFORE THEY DESTROY US.

DESTROY THEM? YOU FOOL! IF WE CAN FIND SOME WAY OF PERMANENTLY COMBINING THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN WITH THAT PROTOPLASM, WE'D HAVE A LIVING, THINKING CREATURE FAR SUPERIOR TO MAN!

THINK OF IT! A BRAIN THAT CAN OUT THINK MAN A THOUSAND TO ONE--AND WITH A BODY TO DO ITS BIDDING! WHY, WITH AN ARMY OF SUCH CREATURES WE COULD TAKE OVER THE EARTH--YOU AND I!

NO! NO-- I WON'T BE A PARTY TO THIS.

YOU DON'T REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAY-ING. WE COULDN'T UNLEASH A HORROR LIKE THAT UPON THE WORLD!

ALL RIGHT, HATCH. IF YOU'RE TOO QUEASY-- I'LL WORK IT OUT-- *ALONE!*

THERE WAS A GRIM, UNMISTAKABLE NOTE OF CHALLENGE IN THE REMARK, BUT A MOMENT LATER, TITUS' FACE WAS AN ICY MASK, AS WILBUR FETCHED HIS COAT.

ALL RIGHT, DESTROY YOUR PROTOPLASM IF YOU WISH-- BUT MY ELECTRONIC BRAIN IS A TRIUMPH OF HUMAN INGENUITY. I WON'T LET YOU TOUCH IT.

I CAN'T FORCE YOU TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT, TITUS. BUT AT LEAST I'LL FULFILL MY OWN DUTY TO MANKIND! I'M GOING TO DESTROY THAT ABOMINABLE THING IN THAT VAT!

I'LL DRIVE INTO TOWN. I NEED A POWERFUL ACID TO DISSOLVE THE PROTOPLASM AND DESTROY IT. I DON'T WANT EVEN A SINGLE CELL TO SURVIVE!

BUT LEAVING TITUS GRIMM ALONE IN THAT HOUSE WAS A GHASTLY MISTAKE! FOR A MOMENT LATER...

ALL I NEED IS A HALF HOUR ALONE! JUST TIME ENOUGH TO MAKE THE ADJUSTMENT I NEED TO CARRY OUT MY IDEAS.

WITH FANATIC SPEED GRIMM WORKED ON HIS DEVILISH TASK. THEN AT LAST...

THESE WIRES WILL PROVIDE THE PROPER HOOK-UP FOR CONTROLLING THAT MASS OF PROTOPLASM!

I'VE SET THE CONTROLS FOR THE MACHINE'S NEXT PROBLEM! HOW TO DESTROY HATCH WHEN HE RETURNS! NOW I'LL CONNECT THE BRAIN TO THE CELL MASS --

BUT TITUS GRIMM HAD FORGOTTEN ONE MACABRE FACT! THE BRAIN WAS ALREADY FAR BEYOND THE CONTROL OF ANY HUMAN BEING! A MOMENT LATER, THE VISCOID MASS IN THE VAT HEAVED AND BEGAN TO MOVE!

THERE, I'VE DONE IT! I'VE CREATED A LIVING, THINKING CREATURE THAT WILL DO MY BIDDING! *HA-HA-HA!*

IT'S CLIMBING OUT OF THE VAT! NO! NOT YET! IT'S NOT TIME! HATCH ISN'T BACK YET!

IT'S COMING TOWARDS ME! IT MEANS TO DESTROY ME! *NO! NO!*

DON'T TOUCH ME! DON'T--AAAIIEE!

OUTSIDE THE BUILDING WILBUR HATCH WAS CLIMBING OUT OF HIS CAR WITH A LARGE BOTTLE IN HIS HANDS. HE STARED AT THE HOUSE AS HE HEARD THE DEATH CRY OF TITUS!

THERE'S TROUBLE INSIDE!

AAAAiiiEE EE

IT'S TITUS! THAT CURSED THING HAS HIM! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO... THIS BOTTLE OF ACID.

SPLASH!

I CAN'T GET CLOSE ENOUGH, BUT MAYBE I CAN MANAGE IT THIS WAY!

AS THE FIERY ACID RAINED DOWN UPON THE ABOMINATION BELOW, THE SLIMY MASS BEGAN TO DISINTEGRATE BEFORE HATCH'S EYES!

THE BRAIN! HE HAD IT HOOKED UP TO THAT CELL MASS!

FOR ONE MOMENT, THE SICKENING REALIZATION OF GRIMM'S OBSCENE PLAN SWEPT OVER HIM! AND THEN, WILBUR HATCH TURNED SLOWLY AWAY FROM THE HORRIBLE, ODOROUS SCENE!

HE'S GONE, BUT IT'S BETTER THIS WAY. AT LEAST THE HORROR HE WOULD HAVE RELEASED ON THE WORLD WILL BE FOREVER DESTROYED!

THE THING THAT GREW!!

FROM THE SPINE-CHILLING SLEEP OF A LIVING DEATH, FROM THE UNBELIEVABLE HORROR OF A MILLION YEARS AGO, FROM A FORGOTTEN ICE-CAVE DEEP IN THE TOMB OF THE EARTH COMES THE MONSTROUS TERROR OF...

GREAT SCOTT! A PERFECTLY PRESERVED *BABY DINOSAUR*... FROZEN INTO THE ICE A MILLION YEARS AGO! I MUST TAKE IT BACK TO MY LABORATORY... MAYBE I CAN *BRING IT TO LIFE...!!*

DR. MARVELLE, THE WORLD'S MOST BRILLIANT EXPLORER AND SCIENTIST, TOOK THE DINOSAUR BACK TO HIS *SECLUDED LABORATORY* IN VERMONT. IN SECRECY, HE TINKERED WITH THE STAGGERING SECRETS OF LIFE...

IF ONLY I AM DOING THE *RIGHT THING*... IN THE INTEREST OF SCIENCE! I THINK...THIS EXPERIMENT WILL BRING THE *BEAST* BACK TO LIFE...!

I'VE FOUND IT! THIS IS IT...*THE SECRET OF LIFE!!*

Witches Tales #27, October 1954. Art: Manny Stallman. Publisher: Harvey Comics.

NOW TO LET IT *SLEEP* IN THE LIQUID I HAVE JUST DISCOVERED!

But WHEN DR. MARVELLE CAME INTO THE LAB THE NEXT MORNING, HE FELT THE *HAND OF HORROR* TOUCH HIS TINGLING SPINE...

IT'S - IT'S GONE! THAT WINDOW...*SOMETHING* HAS GONE THROUGH THAT *WINDOW!*

GASP!...THE MONSTER HAS *GROWN!* WHAT IF IT DOESN'T STOP GROWING..! WHA-! WHAT WAS THAT NOISE FROM THE MOORS--?!

AA

OOWWHHHH

GRAAAOOHWWWWRR!!

GOOD LORD! THERE-THERE IT IS! I MUST FIND SOME WAY TO KILL IT BEFORE IT *GROWS* ANY MORE!!

Spurned BY *TERROR*, DR. MARVELLE WORKED ALL DAY TO FIND A FORMULA THAT WOULD *KILL* THE DINOSAUR BUT, THAT NIGHT...

GRAAAOOHW

IT'S..,NO USE... I CAN'T KILL THE MONSTER I'VE CREATED! WHAT'S *THAT* AGAINST THE SKY...NO! OH, *NO! IT CAN'T BE!..!*

IT'S - COMING BACK HERE... HELLO! HELLO! OPERATOR! GIVE ME THE POLICE... *EMERGENCY...* I'VE GOT TO RUN! IT'S COMING *NEARER!*

BRRR

BRRR

ULP! I--I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT... IT'S *GROWING* RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES!

THE BULLETS JUST BOUNCE OFF IT! WE'LL HAVE TO *EVACUATE THE COUNTRY-SIDE* FOR MILES AROUND!

IT'S *USE-LESS!*... WE NEED ARTILLERY! CALL THE *ARMY!!*

RATATATATATA

BAM!

DEATH HELD A PARTY! THE *HIDEOUS FREAK* GREW UNTIL *ALL OF VERMONT* WAS HIDDEN BY THE BEAST... AND STILL IT *GREW...!*

NEWS FLASH! U.S.A. IN GRIP OF TERROR! STOCK MARKET CRUMBLES!

FLASH! UNITED NATIONS SAY ALL NATIONS TO HELP KILL DINOSAUR!

CAN

VT.

RK

MA

N.H.

THE H-BOMBS DON'T DO ANYTHING!... IT *CAN'T BE KILLED!*

NAVY

THE FLUID I DISCOVERED *WON'T WEAR OFF!* THE MONSTER *CAN'T STOP GROWING!!*

MI... OF CANADA

MAINE

N.H.

NTARIO

NEW YORK

RIE

ATLANTIC

EEEYOOWRRR!

IT'S COMING! IT'S *COMING!* *HELP! ARRGGHH! EEEEEE!*

GRRROOWRRRRRR

Finally THE *FIEND OF DEATH* COVERED THE EARTH!

RATTAT TAT TAT

WHOOM!

BAM BLAM

BOOM!!

The WEIGHT OF THE HUGE ANIMAL KNOCKED THE EARTH OUT OF ITS ORBIT AND SENT IT WHIRLING TOWARD THE SUN... AND DESTRUCTION!!

WE'RE - FLYING - *INTO THE SUN!* WE'LL ALL BE DESTROYED! I NEVER SHOULD HAVE TAMPERED WITH THE *PROBLEMS OF LIFE*... AND DEATH!!

BARRROOOOOOOM!

HELP! HELP!... HUH? *WHEWWW!* IT WAS JUST A... *DREAM!* BUT I'M GOING RIGHT DOWN TO THE LAB AND *DESTROY* THE DINOSAUR... *JUST IN CASE!!*

Dizzy WITH *HORROR*, MARVELLE FOUND THE LAB EXACTLY THE WAY IT WAS... *IN THE NIGHTMARE!!*

IT... CAN'T... BE...

A HUGE FOOTPRINT! NOW IT'S REAL!!!

GPROOOWWR!

THE END

Can we be sure there is no basis in fact for the strange and terrible tales of Greek mythology? Are we to say flatly that the chilling stories of the Cretan labyrinth, and the monstrous Minotaur that it held, are but fantasies... nothing more than the fabulous dreamings of ancient minds? Howard Thorensen and his wife would say, NO! — if they could! After all, who should know better than they, for they met face to face...

THE MONSTER IN THE MAZE!

B-1817

CRETE! THAT ANCIENT ISLAND, LIKE A POLISHED STONE SET IN THE BLUE MEDITERRANEAN, HOLDING WITHIN ITS SUBSTANCE THE REMNANTS OF THE EARLIEST KNOWN WESTERN CIVILIZATION! IT IS HERE, AT THE FAMOUS CNOSSUS EXCAVATIONS, THAT HOWARD AND AMY THORENSEN STAND AWED BY THE MAGNITUDE AND GRANDEUR OF THE GREAT MINOAN PALACE!

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL? THINK OF IT, HOWARD! OVER 3000 YEARS OLD!

YES, KING MINOS HIMSELF, MAY HAVE RULED FROM THIS VERY THRONE!

THE EXCITED TRAVELERS PASS FROM ROOM TO ROOM OF THE IMMENSE STRUCTURE, STARING WIDE-EYED AT THE STRANGE SCULPTURE AND WALL PAINTINGS. THEN IN ONE REMOTE CHAMBER A FATEFUL DISCOVERY IS MADE...

AMY! LOOK! I MUST HAVE TRIPPED SOME HIDDEN RELEASE! A PART OF THE WALL IS OPENING! THERE ARE...

...TUNNELS, OR CORRIDORS OF SOME SORT!

ARE YOU GAME, AMY? I HAVE MY FLASH-LIGHT! LET'S SEE WHERE IT GOES! THIS MAY BE AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY!

Adventures Into Darkness #13, March 1954. Art: Gene Fawcette. Publisher: Standard.

INDEED IT IS! IF THESE TWO INTREPID MORTALS, WITH THEIR LITTLE FLICKERING LIGHT, COULD KNOW WHAT IS HELD WITHIN THE BLACKENED BOWELS OF THIS MAZE, THEY WOULD BOTH RUSH SCREAMING BACK TO SAFETY. BUT WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT OUR FATE...!

IT'S SO DARK! MAYBE WE SHOULD GO BACK AND TELL THE GUARDS!

DON'T BE SO NERVOUS! WE'LL TELL THEM LATER, WHEN... OHHHHH! THESE STONES HAVE SHARP EDGES!

- ..

-. ..

AIIEEEEE!!

WHAT IS THAT!

BONES, BY GEORGE! HUMAN BONES! THIS MUST HAVE BEEN SOME KIND OF BURIAL PLACE, OR... OR... SA-A-AY! THESE WINDING PASSAGES... THE DEAD ENDS... THE DIFFERENT DOORS... TH...THE...

...THE LABYRINTH! IT COULD BE! IT COULD BE! BY GEORGE! MAYBE IT WASN'T JUST A STORY AFTER ALL!

THEN, SOMEHOW IN THE TWISTING MAZE, HOWARD AND AMY BECOME SEPARATED! SUDDENLY...

AARRRAHHH!!

STUMBLING THROUGH THE ECHOING CHAMBERS, HOWARD SEARCHES FRANTICALLY FOR HIS WIFE, NOT DARING TO EVEN IMAGINE WHAT HAS EVOKED HER SCREAMS!

AMY! AMY!

THEN HE TURNS A CORNER! HIS WAVERING BEAM CREEPS ALONG THE DRIPPING WALLS AND INTO A HUGH CENTRAL TOMB, THE RESTING PLACE OF MINOS, THE "MYTHOLOGICAL" CRETAN KING! AND THERE, CRUMPLED ON THE FLOOR...

AMY!

DEAD!

NO! NO! NO! W—WHY... WHY! HOW!

THE MONSTER! NO—IT CAN'T BE!

THE ATTACK IS SWIFT AND TERRIBLE! BUT BY SOME LAST SPARK OF SELF-PRESERVATION, HIS FROZEN MUSCLES GALVANIZE TO AVOID THE MONSTER'S LUNGE!

...AND AGAIN!

HE FINDS THE DOOR AND RUSHES LIKE A CRAZY-MAN FROM THE AWFUL CRYPT AND ITS GHOSTLY FIEND, BACK THROUGH THE DARK PASSAGES!

THE MINOTAUR! THE MINOTAUR!

LOST IN THE LABYRINTH! MADLY HE SEARCHES FOR THE WAY OUT, KNOWING THAT EACH TURN MIGHT THROW HIM INTO THE DEADLY EMBRACE OF THE PURSUING MONSTER! THEN...

BLOOD! DROPS OF BLOOD! THAT CUT ON MY LEG... I'VE BEEN BLEEDING! NOW I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT!

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF HIS OWN BLOOD, HE AT LAST STUMBLES INTO THE LIGHT, AND SINKS TO THE FLOOR IN A FAINT! THE SECRET DOOR SWINGS SLOWLY SHUT!

LOOK THERE! THE MAN MUST BE ILL!

AT THE LOCAL INFIRMARY...

IT KILLED AMY! AMY IS DEAD! AND NOW IT'S GOING TO KILL ME ...THE MONSTER! HELP ME! HELP ME!

THE POOR FELLOW IS OBVIOUSLY DELIRIOUS!

DAYS PASS, AND NO ONE WILL BELIEVE HIS STORY! HE IS CONFINED IN AN ASYLUM TO WAIT FOR TREATMENT...

WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN? I TELL YOU IT'S THERE! AND THE MONSTER IS AFTER ME! I KNOW IT! DON'T LET IT GET ME! YOU MUST HELP ME!

LABYRINTH! MINOTAUR! HA-A-A-A HA-HA SECRET DOOR IN THE WALL! HA-A-A-A HA HA HA-A-A-A!

THEN ONE NIGHT FROM AN ADJOINING WARD, A HUGE MAN, DANGEROUSLY INSANE, FINDS HIS WAY INTO HOWARD'S ROOM, HIMSELF ALMOST MAD WITH GRIEF AND FEAR...

WHO IS IT? WH...

NO NO HELP! AAARRR

HIS CRIES BRINGS THE GUARDS RUNNING...

THE MONSTER! IT FOUND ME I... I... OHHHHH!

HE'S DEAD! HIS THROAT... TORN! A MONSTER? I WONDER!

AND SO HOWARD PAYS A BELATED PRICE FOR HIS TEMERITY IN UNCOVERING THE DARK THINGS TIME HAS HIDDEN! AND COULD IT BE THAT THE SPIRIT OF THE MINOTAUR IS, IN TRUTH, NO LONGER BOUND WITHIN ITS MAZE! COULD IT BE, THAT IT IS AT LAST FREE, AFTER 3000 YEARS!

The End

NEWS REPORTER, NOAH BRANDT, WAS GIVEN AN EERIE ASSIGNMENT WHICH LED HIM TO FACE A HORROR THAT MOVED AND LIVED FOR THE LUST OF KILLING... FOR IT WAS...

THE THING FROM THE CENTER OF THE EARTH!

I SHALL NEVER FORGET MAY 6TH, FOR IT WAS ON THAT DAY THAT VIVIENNE PONERS, THE YOUNG WIFE OF JOHN PONERS, RESEARCH ASSISTANT TO HER FATHER, PROF. THORENSON, THE FAMOUS PHYSICIST, CALLED ME TO HER HOUSE...

I CAME AS SOON AS I COULD, VIVIENNE! WHAT'S WRONG?

OH, NOAH! YOU MUST HELP ME! SOMETHING HORRIBLE IS GOING ON!

ZZZZZZZZZZZ-- C-CRACKLE-

GREAT SCOTT! WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE!

PLEASE, NOAH... REASON WITH THEM... T-THEY WON'T LISTEN TO ME!

Thrills of Tomorrow #18, December 1954. Art: Warren Kremer. Publisher: Harvey Comics.

MR. BRANDT! THIS IS INDEED A PLEASURE!

NOAH! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING YOURSELF? COME IN! COME IN! YOU'RE GOING TO SEE SOMETHING YOU NEVER DREAMED ABOUT!

SO I UNDERSTAND FROM VIVIENNE!

JOHN PULLED ME EXCITEDLY TOWARDS A CLUSTER OF WEIRD-LOOKING INSTRUMENTS THAT FLICKERED ON AND OFF AT REGULAR INTERVALS INTER-LOCKED WITH A SERIES OF SOUND SIGNALS THAT ROSE AND DECREASED IN INTENSITY!

NOAH...WHAT IF I TOLD YOU THAT THERE'S SOME SORT OF LIFE DEEP WITHIN THE EARTH... A LIFE WE'RE NOT EVEN AWARE OF?

I'D SAY YOU'RE EITHER JOKING OR WORKING TOO HARD!

B-B-EEEEP-P-EEEP!

NO, I ASSURE YOU...I NEVER WAS MORE SERIOUS IN ALL MY LIFE! PROF. THORENSON AND I HAVE MANAGED TO CONTACT THIS "BEING" OR WHATEVER IT IS WHEN WE FIRST NOTICED IRREG-ULARITIES IN OUR RADAR SIGNALS WITHIN THIS AREA!

AS YOU KNOW, WE WERE FIRST TRYING TO FIND HOW DEEP MODIFIED ELECTRICAL IMPULSES CAN PENETRATE THE EARTH'S CORE FROM THE RETURN IMPULSES OF THESE WAVES. THEN WE STARTED GETTING INTELLI-GENT RESPONSES, WE ERECTED A DEVICE THAT ENABLES WHATEVER IT IS TO REACH THE SURFACE VIA OUR BEAM!

THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU HERE, NOAH! YOU MUST STOP THEM! I JUST KNOW SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG HERE! I HAVE SUCH A-A STRONG FEELING OF DANGER!

YOU'RE RIGHT, VIVIENNE! SHOULDN'T YOU CONTACT THE PROPER AUTHORITIES ON THIS DISCOVERY, PROF?

YES, EXCEPT FOR ONE THING! WE HAVE NO VISIBLE MEANS OF PROOF...AND BEFORE WE COULD SET UP THE NECESSARY BATTERY OF TESTS TO ESTABLISH OUR FINDINGS, WE'LL LOSE THE SIGNAL, PERHAPS FOREVER!

I COULD SENSE THE THRILL OF PENETRATING THE UNKNOWN MYSELF... BUT UNDER THIS EXCITEMENT WAS A FAR MORE SERIOUS MOTIVE! WHAT WOULD THEY FIND? I DECIDED TO STICK WITH THEM, AND A FEW DAYS LATER, WE SET OUT FOR THE REGION WHERE THESE IMPULSES WERE STRONGEST...

AFTER ARRIVING, WE BUILT A SMALL OBSERVATION HOUSE STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND ANY WINDSTORM IN THAT DESOLATE REGION OF THE COUNTRY.

CAREFUL, NOW! DON'T DROP THAT WINCH!

UGHH... NO WONDER YOU LET ME COME!

DURING THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, WE MANAGED TO CONSTRUCT A FAIRLY LARGE EXCAVATION CAMP THAT WOULD HAVE PUT MANY A PROFESSIONAL OUTFIT TO SHAME! THEN, AGAIN, JOHN PONERS AND PROF. THORENSON WERE EXPERTS!

FINALLY, AFTER THREE MORE DAYS OF ARDUOUS TOIL AND CONSTANT RE-BEAMING OF THE SIGNALS THAT NOW CAME IN CONTINUOUSLY, THE FIRST OF THE HORRIBLE EVENTS OCCURRED!

LOOK! OHHHHH!

THE GROUND'S RISING! THAT MEANS OUR VISITOR HAS REACHED THE FIRST LAYER OF TOP SOIL! SOMEONE'S GOT TO GO DOWN AND SEE IF THE ASCENT WILL BE MADE HERE...OR IN ANOTHER REGION!

I'LL DO IT!

EGGRRRUNNNGGHHHoo

TAKE EXTREME CARE, NOAH! SIGNAL US IMMEDIATELY IF ANYTHING GOES WRONG! WE'LL PULL YOU UP AT ONCE!

DON'T WORRY, PROF! I'M THE LEAST VALUABLE OF YOU THREE... NOTHING CAN HAPPEN TO "IRON-SIDE" BRANDT!

BUT I WISH I WAS REALLY AS CONFIDENT AS I SEEMED! THEY LOWERED ME INTO A PIT OF HELL! I COULD SEE OILY SULPHUROUS FUMES SLOWLY CASCADING OUT OF THE PIT'S BOTTOM!

THE WALLS ARE AS SMOOTH AS GLASS... AND I CAN'T SEE THE BOTTOM OF THIS MUD-HOLE! OUR VISITOR IS INTELLIGENT ALL RIGHT! NOTHING HUMAN COULD CREATE A SHAFT IN THIS MANNER FROM WAY DOWN BELOW!

THEN AS A DARKER MASS OF SOMETHING FROM THOSE DEPTHS SLOWLY UNDULATED TOWARDS ME, I SUDDENLY GREW PANIC-STRICKEN WITH A SENSE OF UTTER FRIGHT AND LOATHING THAT WAS ABNORMAL! SECONDS LATER, I WAS BACK ON THE SURFACE WAITING THE HORROR THAT WAS TO COME WITH BATED BREATH!

NOAH! WHAT IS IT? DID YOU SEE ANYTHING DOWN THERE!

WAIT...DO YOU HEAR IT? IT... IT'S COMING UP!

E-E-EEEE! IT'S A PAIR OF HANDS. T-T-THEY'RE AS BIG AS OUR OWN ARMS!

DON'T LOSE YOUR NERVES! KEEP CALM! WATCH!

AAAARRRRGGGHH!!

GOOD LORD! IT...IT HAS A HUMAN SHAPE...BUT...BUT THAT FACE...UGGH! IT'S THAT OF A SENTIENT INTELLIGENCE, NOT HUMAN!

BACK..!. GET BACK TO THE SHACK! HURRY!

AAAARRRGGGHH!!

ONE LOOK WAS ENOUGH FOR ME! THIS WAS NO ORDINARY CREATURE...IT SEEMED RATHER TO BE A THING THAT HAD BEEN INCREDIBLY ALIVE FOR HUNDREDS OF CENTURIES...FILLING ALL WHO LOOKED AT IT WITH NAMELESS DREAD!

JOHN...I TOLD YOU NOT TO VIOLATE THE SECRETS OF NATURE! I TOLD YOU... OHH!

DON'T LOSE YOUR COURAGE HONEY! WE'LL THINK OF SOMETHING TO CONTROL THAT...THAT BEAST! WE MUST!

CRASH!

WELL...RIGHT NOW...I'D GRAB THESE RIFLES IF I WERE YOU! THAT BABY OUT THERE MEANS BUSINESS!

OHHH...HE'S SMASHING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF EQUIPMENT! WE CAN'T JUST STAND HERE! WE *MUST* STOP IT!

BUT THERE WAS NO STOPPING THIS MONSTER THAT BROUGHT TERROR AND FEAR TO THE HEARTS OF EVEN THE BRAVEST OF US! WE WAITED PARALYZED, FOR THE MOMENT IT WOULD TEAR DOWN THE DOOR, AND STALK IN TOWARD US...!

E-E-E-HELP!

RRRIIPP!

CRASH

OPEN FIRE... FOR GOD'S SAKE!

WE CAN'T STOP THIS THING! I'VE PUMPED A HALF-DOZEN BULLETS INTO ITS BODY!

BANG BANG BA BANG

BANG BAA BANG

VIVIENNE!...DARLING...FATHER... NOAH...DO SOMETHING! IT'LL KILL HER!!...

QUICK!! AIM FOR THAT GLOBE ON ITS HEAD! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!

AAIIIEEEE

BANG BANG

GET THEM AWAY FROM HERE! I THINK THIS THING IS GOING TO EXPLODE!

VIVIENNE, DEAREST!

JOHN... OH, JOHN!

BARROOM

THE GLOBE MUST HAVE CONTROLLED ITS AIR PRESSURE! BREAKING IT, RELEASED ITS NORMAL FLUID MEDIUM TO OUR AIR MUCH LIGHTER IN DENSITY, AND CAUSED IT TO EXPLODE! WE'RE THROUGH WITH THAT HORROR FOREVER!

YES, WE WERE THROUGH WITH THE HORROR, BUT WE HADN'T FORGOTTEN IT. WHEN PEOPLE STOP AND KID ME ABOUT MY GRAY HAIR, I ALWAYS KID RIGHT BACK...FOR THIS IS ONE STORY, I, NOAH BRANDT, CAN NEVER WRITE FOR POSTERITY!

THE END

YOU ARE ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVES IN THIS SMALL KENTUCKY HILL-TOWN. FOR OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS, YOUR ANCESTORS -- AND TODAY EVEN YOU -- HAVE LIVED A LIFE OF HUMDRUM CONTENTMENT. THEN SUDDENLY, YOU ARE JOLTED OUT OF YOUR WAY OF LIVING AND YOU ARE HURLED INTO A WILD, NIGHTMARE TERROR; YOU WONDER WHOM IT WILL STRIKE NEXT -- YOUR NEIGHBOR, A LOVED ONE, OR EVEN **YOURSELF**; YOU EXIST, MOMENT TO MOMENT, IN A COLD-SWEAT FEAR OF

the DARK ABYSMAL

JOHNNY BELL

IT'S A COMIN' THIS WAY! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES...

LOOK, IT'S JOEL'S STABLES THIS TIME!

AS THEY RAN, THEY COULD HEAR THE TORTURED SOUND OF WOOD BEING RIPPED. THEY COULD HEAR THE DEEP RUMBLE OF ALIEN ANGER...

AARRRUUGHH

MILES AWAY IN A BIG-CITY NEWSPAPER OFFICE, THE STORY WAS BEGINNING TO DRIBBLE IN ON THE TICKER MACHINE...

BETTER GET YOURSELF DOWN THERE PRONTO, HAP. LOOKS LIKE A GOOD STORY! WHAT'S THE PLACE AGAIN...

GOPHERSVILLE! MIGHT BE A HOAX, BUT IF YOU SAY SO, I'LL DIG IT!

Monster #2, 1953. Art: John Belcastro. Publisher: Fiction House.

IT'S FUNNY... HAP'S BEEN A BIG-CITY REPORTER FOR MORE YEARS THAN HE CARES TO REMEMBER, AND HE'S WRITTEN HIS STORIES AS THEY COME, SOMETIMES WITH TONGUE-IN-CHEEK. THEN, ONE DAY "THE BIG ONE"--AND HE DOESN'T KNOW QUITE HOW TO TELL IT...

THE DAY THE COMMOTION STARTED WAS JUST LIKE ANY OTHER SUMMER DAY IN GOPHERSVILLE, ESPECIALLY AT THE OLD SWIMMING HOLE ON BEN JACKSON'S PROPERTY...

C'MAWN, JEBBY--THEM OLE TADPOLES AIN'T GONNA HURT YE!

NO SWIMM

THEN, ONE OF THE KIDS FISHING GOT HIS HOOK SNAGGED ON SOMETHING...

LOOKEE HERE--EITHER I'M CATCHIN' ME A WHALE OR THAT DURNED HOOK'S CAUGHT ON A LOG. HEY, DAN'L, DIVE DOWN FER A LOOK-SEE, WILL YE?

THE BOY, DAN'L, WENT DOWN, AND AS HE RELEASED THE HOOK, SOMETHING MOVED THERE IN THE DARK, MURKY DEPTHS...

WHEN DAN'L SURFACED, HE YELLED, AND THE KIDS RACED FOR SHORE, AS A VAGUE OUTLINE SHIMMERED IN THE WATER...

THEY SAW IT CLEARLY AS IT SURFACED AND CAME ASHORE RIGHT AFTER THEM...

HEE, HEE! LOOKS LIKE A TADPOLE THAT GROWED TOO MANY LEGS!

A'COMIN' RIGHT AFTER YOU, DAN'L, LIKE HE WUZ YOUR FRIEND!

SURE ENOUGH, THE LITTLE THING HUDDLED ITS WET BODY AGAINST DAN'L...

MEBBE IT'S THANKIN' YE FOR FREEIN' IT FROM THE HOOK--BUT, SAY, WHAT IN TARNATION IS IT, ANYWAY?

SURE'S TAKIN' A SHINE TO ME, HUH? WE'LL TAKE IT TO TOWN, MAYBE SOMEONE THERE'LL KNOW WHAT IT IS!

WHEN THEY REACHED TOWN, THE FIRST PEOPLE THEY MET ONLY STARED CURIOUSLY AT THE QUEER CREATURE, WHO KEPT CLOSE TO DAN'L...

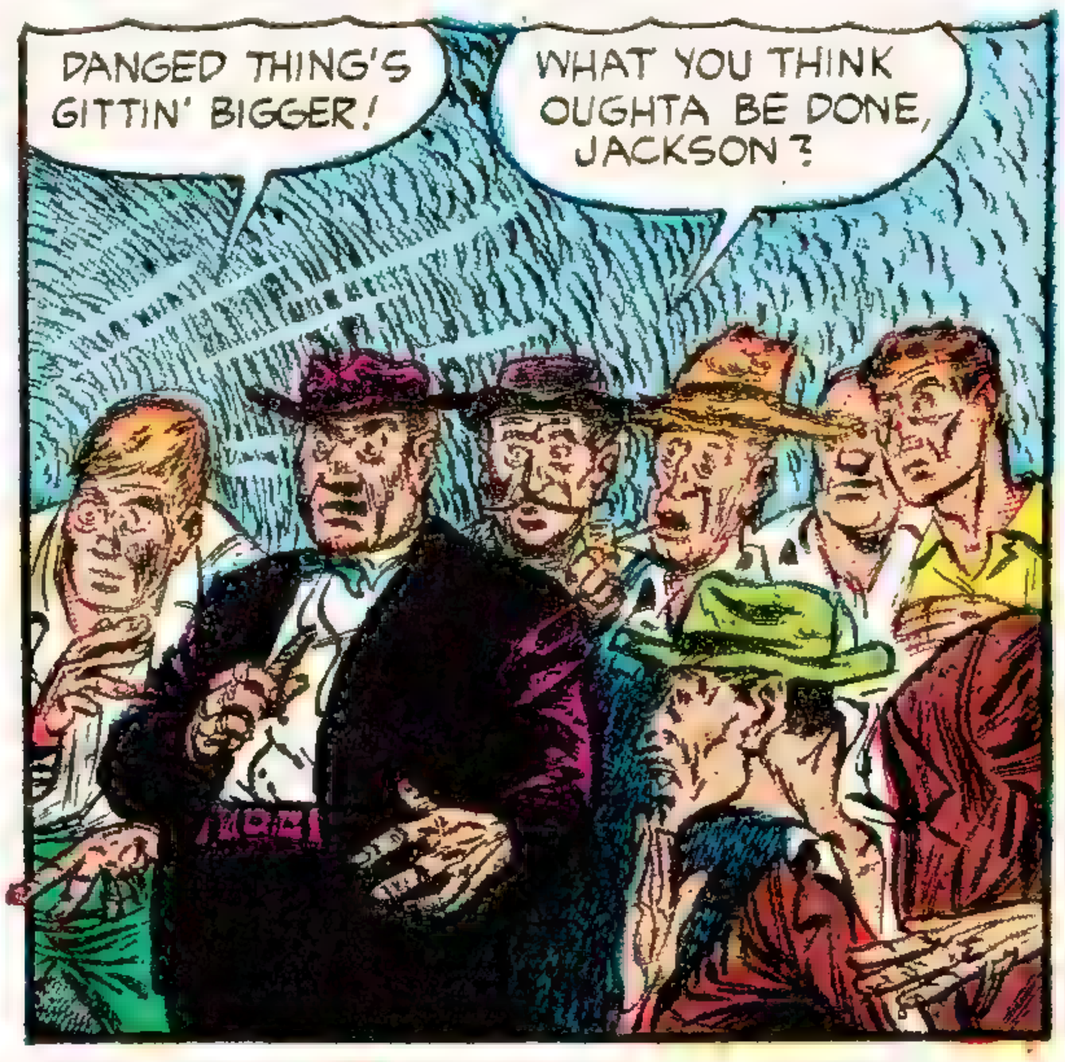
WAT'CHA GOT THERE, BOYS?

DUNNO! WE FOUND IT IN JACKSON'S POND!

BUT NOBODY IN TOWN KNEW WHAT IT WAS. CURIOSITY BECAME WONDER; WONDER BECAME BAFFLEMENT; AND WHAT HUMANS CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEY FEAR...

AND AS THE FEAR AND THE EXCITEMENT GREW, THE SHAPE AND SIZE OF THE STRANGE CREATURE ALTERED..

A PLAINTIVE, ALIEN SOUND...AND IT SET THEIR HEARTS BEATING FASTER...



A CRAFTY GLEAM SPRUNG INTO BEN JACKSON'S EYES; HIS BRAIN WAS QUICKLY CALCULATING THE POSSIBILTIES...

A FREAK FISH OF SOME KIND, THET TRAVELIN' CARNIVAL WILL PAY PLENTY, IF THE THING KIN REALLY CHANGE ITS SIZE...

JACKSON SPOKE SOFTLY TO HOLD BACK THE GREED THAT WAS LEAPING INSIDE HIM...

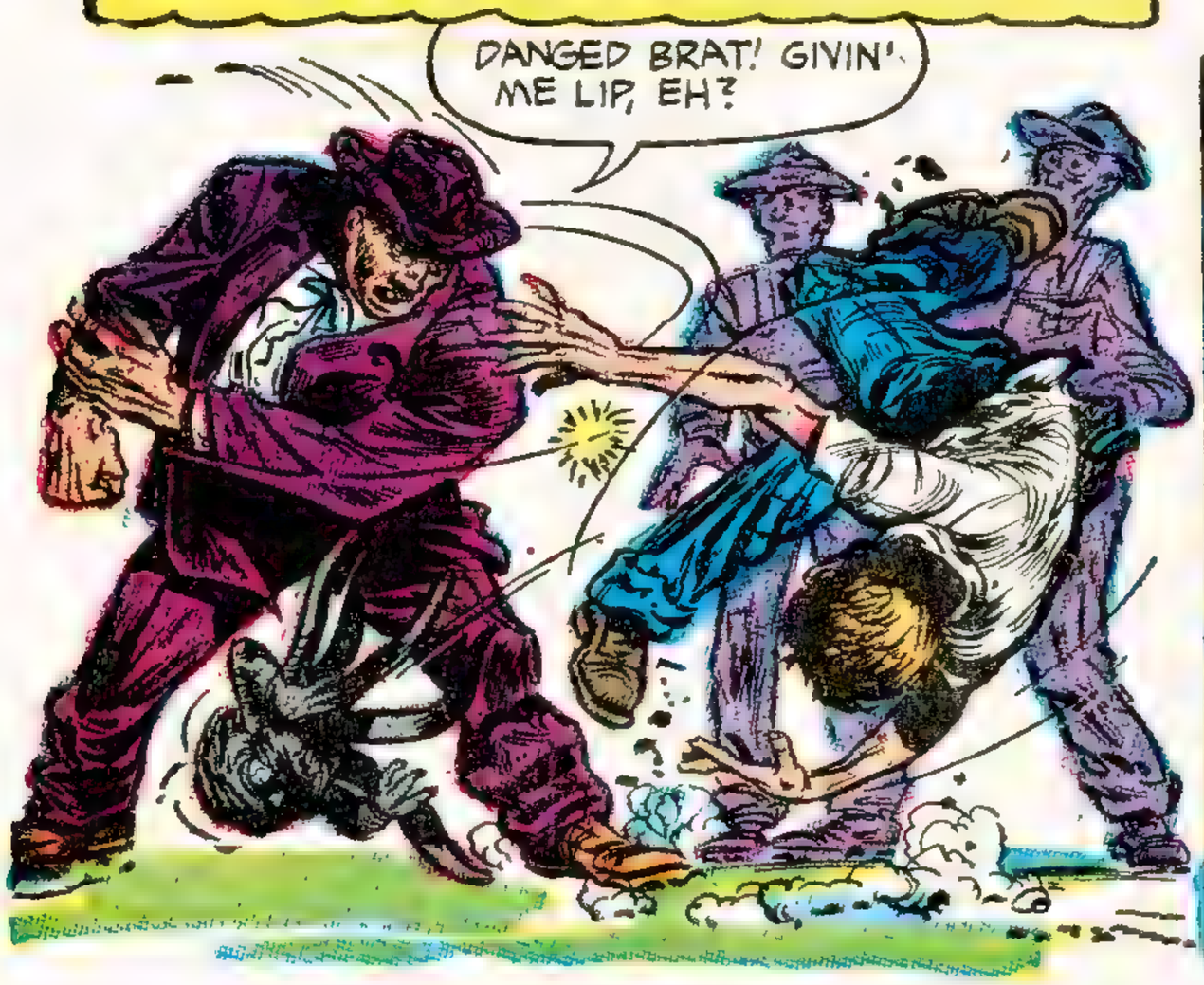
WAL NOW, SEEIN' THE CRITTER WAS FOUND ON MY PROPERTY, SEEMS TO ME IT'S RIGHTFULLY MINE. ONE OF MY TRUCKS'LL TAKE IT OUT TO THE FARM, WHERE I'LL KEEP IT IN A VAT!

THE CREATURE SEEMED TO SENSE WHAT WAS IN JACKSON'S MIND, AND DAN'L COULD FEEL ITS FRIGHT GROWING...

RESPECTS TO YOUR PROPERTY, SUH, BUT I FOUND IT! IT'S MINE! I AIM TO KEEP IT!

JACKSON SEEMED STUNNED FOR A MOMENT, THEN RED ANGRY HAZED, AS HE RUSHED IN...

DANGED BRAT! GIVIN' ME LIP, EH?



EMOTIONS WERE LIKE ELECTRICITY NOW--ELECTRICITY GONE WILD... IT WAS IN THE AIR, LIKE A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE, TRAVELLING FROM ONE TO THE OTHER...

I SAY KILL IT, AN' STOP ALL THE FUSSIN'!

NO SENSE HAVIN' TROUBLE OVER THAT LITTLE THING!

LITTLE? HEY, LOOK AT IT...

BEN JACKSON'S ASTONISHMENT FROZE HIM TO THE SPOT; THE FRIENDLY LITTLE POLYP HAD BECOME A THING OF BLOATED HORROR...

C-C-CAN'T BE! JUST C-C-CAN'T BE...

IT SEEMED ALMOST AS IF THE ANGER, THE EXCITEMENT AND THE FEAR OF THE PEOPLE HAD TRANSMITTED ITSELF TO THE MANY-LEGGED GIANT...

RUN FER YOUR LIFE, MARTHA!

THE FEAR WAS RAMPANT, ITS TENDRILS REACHING INTO EVERY LIVING THING IN THE AREA...

AS THE WEAPONS LEFT THEIR HANDS, THE SOLID OUTLINES OF THE MONSTROSITY SEEMED TO FADE, AS IF THE THING HAD STEPPED INTO AN INVISIBLE FOURTH DIMENSION...

AT THE EDGE OF THE TOWN, TRUCK ENGINES COUGHED...

GIT MOVIN', DAVIS! WE'LL KNOCK IT OUT COLD BY RAMMIN' IT!

DESPERATE PEOPLE PREPARED FOR A LAST DITCH STAND...

COMIN' THIS WAY!

THESE FORKS AND ROCKS OUGHTA SOFTEN IT UP FOR JACKSON TO RAM IT! GIT READY TO THROW...

BEN JACKSON'S FINGERS WERE LOCKED ON THE STEERING WHEEL, AS HIS TRUCK CHARGED DOWN THE STREET...

MUST BE WORTH A MILLION DOLLARS TO A BIG TIME CARNIVAL! I'LL GIT HIM!

BUT DID YE SEE WHAT HAPPENED? AND--AND LOOK AT IT NOW...

AFTERWARD, THE PEOPLE OF GOPHERSVILLE ASKED THEMSELVES IF THE MONSTER HAD ACTUALLY DIVIDED ITSELF INTO EIGHT SEPARATE BODIES OR HAD IT, AS DOCTORS LATER THEORIZED, THROWN A HYPNOTIC SPELL...

AM I GOIN' CRAZY? WHICH ONE IS IT?

WHICHEVER ONE IT WAS THEY NEVER FOUND IT--THERE WERE ONLY TWO TRUCKS, WITH A SHARP RASP OF STEEL AGAINST STEEL, SMASHING HEAD ON...

CRASH

LATER, THE RUINS OF GOPHERSVILLE TOLD THE STORY...

AND THE PEOPLE'S FACES TOLD THE SAME TALE, WHEN THEY CAME ONE BY ONE FROM THEIR HIDING PLACES...

GAWN! MUSTA HEADED INTO TH' HILLS! ANYONE HURT?

ONLY BEN JACKSON, AND NOT SO BAD! HERE HE COMES NOW...

GOT ANY SUGGESTIONS, BEN?

I ALREADY GOT IN TOUCH WITH ARMY OFFICIALS. THEY'LL BE HERE IN A FEW DAYS--TO DESTROY IT!

YOU HEARD HIM, MELISS! HE'S HAVIN' IT KILLED BECAUSE HE CAIN'T HAVE IT HIMSELF...

HUSH, DAN'L! WE'LL WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

A FEW DAYS LATER, AN ARMY OFFICER HAD BROUGHT IN A PLATOON OF MEN WITH RIFLES AND A COMBAT CAR. AT FIRST, THEY TOO THOUGHT IT WAS ALL A BIG HOAX--UNTIL THEY SAW THE WRECKED TOWN WITH THEIR OWN EYES--A TEMPORARY ARMY HEADQUARTERS HAD BEEN SET UP IN THE GENERAL STORE...

MY MEN HAVE THE TELEPHONE LINES WORKING AGAIN; I'VE GOT THE POND GUARDED IN CASE THE THING TRIES TO RETURN TO IT; AND ONE THING IS CERTAIN, GENTLEMEN--ALL LIVING THINGS HAVE GOT TO EAT! WE'LL BE HEARING FROM IT SOON!

ON THE MAIN STREET, MOST OF THE DEBRIS HAD BEEN CLEARED AWAY...

I TELL YUH, MISTER HAP, THAT LITTLE FELLER WAS HARMLESS 'TIL MR. JACKSON STARTED THE RUCKUS. IT WUZ THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES WHO...

SURE, SURE, SONNY! SAY, LOOKS LIKE THERE'S SOME COMMOTION GOING ON OVER AT HQ!

GENERAL ST

A MOMENT EARLIER THE PHONE HAD JANGLED; IT WAS ZEKE CARSON. CALLING FROM AN OUTLYING FARM...

...IN YOUR FIELD NOW? DON'T DISTURB IT, DON'T GET EXCITED--BUT KEEP TRACK OF IT!

CARSON, A COOL HEADED MAN, FOLLOWED THE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER...

DANGED CRITTER'LL NO DOUBT EAT UP MY PLOW HORSES AND MY COWS! FUNNY, I KNOW IT'S IN THERE, BUT NOT A SOUND...

INSIDE THE BARN, THE THING WAS EATING HAY AS PLACIDLY AS A HORSE OR COW...

TENSION WAS RIDING THE AIR ONCE AGAIN; SOLDIERS MOVED TOWARD THE BARN AT A CAREFUL PACE--AND FEAR WENT WITH EACH ONE OF THEM...

A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE ROAR OF AN ENGINE AND THE SKID OF HALTING WHEELS BROKE THE PEACE...

THERE, SUH! EATIN' ME OUTTA STOCK AND NOT MAKIN' A SOUND!

GOOD! IT TRAPPED ITSELF! DEPLOY AS SKIRMISHES, MEN--ON THE DOUBLE!

THE SHARP AND SUDDEN CRACKING OF WOOD, THE MONSTROUS SHAPE LOOMING BEFORE THEM, STOPPED THEM DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS...

THE COMBAT CAR CAREENED WILDLY TOWARD IT; SURE-EYED MACHINE GUNNERS POURED A STEADY STREAM OF LEAD INTO A TARGET THEY COULDN'T POSSIBLY MISS...

IT'S TAKEN ENOUGH SLUGS TO CUT 'IM IN HALF!

THEY MUST BE GOING RIGHT THROUGH IT!

RATTAAATTA

A TENTACLE FLIPPED OUT, AND THE SHOOTING CEASED...

YUUUU!

IN ITS FLIGHT, IT HAD LEFT A PATH OF SMASHED TREES EASY TO FOLLOW; AND BY NIGHT SOLDIERS AND FARMERS WERE SEARCHING THE HILLS...

IT WAS DAWN WHEN A SHOT RANG OUT...

HEY! SOMETHING MOVING IN THAT NICHE DOWN THERE!

TRAPPED! I'VE ALREADY SENT FOR THE AIR FORCE! THEY'RE BRINGING IN A BOMB! CLEAR OUT OF HERE!

AS THEY LEFT THE AREA, THE SEARCHERS DID NOT SEE TWO PEOPLE CROUCHED BEHIND HUGE BOULDERS...

A BOMB, YOU HEARD 'EM, SIS! I JUST KNOW THAT BIG THING AIN'T NO MONSTER!

I DON'T KNOW WHY I BELIEVE YOU, DAN'L, BUT IF YOU'RE A'GONNA DO SOMETHING THEN WE'D BEST BE HURRYIN' DOWN THERE!

WHEN THEY GOT TO THE OPENING OF THE CREVASSE, DAN'L COULD HEAR THE ANGRY, FUTILE STRUGGLE GOING ON INSIDE...

HULLO, THERE! WILL YUH STOP THAT THRASHIN' ABOUT SO'S I KIN FIGGER A WAY OUT FOR YE?

THERE WAS A RUMBLE OF SOUND, AND MELISS, ALMOST SCREAMED WITH FRIGHT AT WHAT SHE SAW...

OH, DAN'L--NO! WHY DID I LET YOU...THE SEARCH PARTY... I'LL SHOUT FOR THEM--NO, I PROMISED I'D STAY QUIET...

INSIDE THE DARK, ROCKY CLEFT DAN'L'S VOICE WENT ON SPEAKING SOFTLY...

HOPED YOU'D RECOLLECT ME AS THE YOUNG 'UN YOU CLUNG TO AT THE POOL, THE ONE WHO FREED YOU FROM THE HOOK, AND, AND-- 'WAL! I DECLARE!

AT THE SOUND OF DAN'L'S VOICE, THE HUGE SQUID BECAME AS IT HAD BEEN DAYS AGO AT THE POOL...

SEE, MELISS--TOLD YUH IT WUZ HARMLESS! IT WUZ THAT GREEDY JACKSON AND THEM FEARFUL FOLKS WHAT MADE IT DO WHAT IT DONE!

WHY, IT'S CUTE! BUT LISTEN--THOSE PLANES ARE COMING FAST!

WHEN THEY REACHED JACKSON'S POOL, MELISS GAVE THE HORSES A SPURT OF SPEED...

HEY, STOP-- IT'S ORDERS... OOOF!

NO EXCITEMENT, LITTLE FELLER! 'YE'LL BE BACK HOME IN ANOTHER MINUTE...

THEN DAN'L WAS WATCHING HIS LITTLE FRIEND DISAPPEAR BENEATH THE POOL'S CALM SURFACE...

WHY, I DO BELIEVE THE LITTLE CRITTER'S SMILIN' AND WAVIN' TUH ME! G'BYE!

AND SWIMMIN'!

IT WAS SOMETIME LATER WHEN THE PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE POOL'S SHORE; AT FIRST IT SEEMED LIKE AN UNDERWATER EXPLOSION--THEN THEY ALL SAW IT...

A SPACE SHIP--THE HULL DISGUISED AS A METEORITE!

DANG! IF AH'D KNOWED IT, COULD'A CHARGED 'EM ALL ADMISSION T'SEE THIS HERE!

WHAT A STORY!

THERE'S NO QUESTION IN MY MIND BUT THAT THEY WERE PEACEFUL EMMISSARIES FROM A DISTANT PLANET--A DIFFERENT LIFE-FORM FROM OURS, VERY SENSITIVE TO EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS, WHICH ONLY LITTLE DAN'L UNDERSTOOD. WHAT A STORY! BUT GEE, I WISH SOMEBODY'D TELL ME HOW TO WRITE IT!

THE END

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OCTOBER FACTION

FREE DIGITAL ASHCAN

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letterer
Shawn Lee

editors
Chris Ryall
& David Mariotte

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WE HAVE IT ON THE ROPES!

KEEP ATTACKING! WE CAN'T LET IT REACH DOWNTOWN!

I THINK WE MADE HIM MAD.

SCREW HIM! I'M MAD NOW!

SMASH!

YOU OKAY, LUCAS?

NEVER BETTER.

THANKS!

MY PLEASURE.

BAM

NOW WHAT DO WE DO WITH IT? WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE IT HERE.

WE COULD CHOP IT UP.

AND MAKE AN EVEN BIGGER MESS?

I GOT THIS... EVERYBODY STAND BACK.

EMAN INVICUS TOTEM!

IT'S KINDA CUTE NOW.

COULDN'T YOU HAVE DONE THAT AT THE START?

JUST THOUGHT OF IT.

CAREFUL, DEAR.

I THINK HE'S ADORABLE. I WANNA KEEP HIM.

I DON'T THINK THAT'S A VERY GOOD IDEA.

DEMONS MAKE TERRIBLE PETS.

AWWWW!

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1

STEVE NILES

DAMIEN WORM

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